

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6643

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, NU
SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL CUT OF MILITARY TRAINING

REF: STATE 127467

BEGIN SUMMARY: EMB WISHES TO GO ON RECORD OPPOSING CUT OF MILITARY TRAINING FOR NICARAGUAN NATIONAL GUARD (GN) AT THIS TIME. PLEASE KEEP EMB ADVISED OF DEPT PLANNING ON HOW THIS MATTER WILL BE HANDLED WITH CONGRESS. END SUMMARY

1. EMB WAS SURPRISED BY NEWS ON MAY 12 THAT SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE HAD DELETED FUNDS FOR MILITARY TRAINING (IMET) PROGRAM IN NICARAGUA. A REUTERS REPORT OF THIS VOTE WAS GIVEN BANNER HEAD-LINE "VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONTINUES: US ENDS THE LAST MILITARY ASSISTANCE" IN LA PRENSA OF SAME DAY. EMBOFFS HAVE EXPLAINED TO PERSONS WHO HAVE INQUIRED THAT COMMITTEE VOTE IS NOT FINAL DECISION BUT COULD BE REVERSED IN FULL SENATE OR IN CONFERENCE COMMITTEE.

2. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT CUTTING OF MILITARY TRAINING AT THIS TIME WOULD BE VERY UNFORTUNATE TIMING. IN EFFECT CONTINUATION OF THE IMET PROGRAM CONSTITUTES THE FINAL STEP IN OUR PHASED DOWN MILITARY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP AND, IN EMBASSY VIEW, SHOULD BE TERMINATED ONLY AS A LAST RESORT IF USG IS UNABLE TO MOVE SOMOZA TOWARD CONSISTENT RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, AN INVITATION TO IAHRC, AND ACCOMMO-

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DATION WITH OPPOSITION LEADING TO DEMOCRATIC CHANGE IN NICARAGUA. AT PRESENT SOMOZA IS MOVING IN THE DIRECTION WE HAVE URGED. TO CUT THE LAST REMNANT OF THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP NOW IS LIKELY TO LEAD SOMOZA TO CONCLUDE THAT HE HAS LITTLE LEFT TO LOSE AND, THEREFORE, LITTLE FURTHER REASON TO TAKE USG'S ATTITUDE INTO CONSIDERATION

3. FURTHER, THIS ISSUE ARISES AT A VERY CRITICAL TIME FOR THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF NICARAGUA. WE BELIEVE CONTINUANCE OF IMET GIVES US LEVERAGE TO INFLUENCE AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF A GON DECISION TO CHANGE ITS POLICY OF RESTRAINT. IF THIS LEVERAGE IS REMOVED IT COULD LEAD SOMOZA TO IGNORE OUR COUNSEL AND INCREASE REPRESSION, WHICH IN TURN COULD INCREASE THE POTENTIAL FOR REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE. THE OUTLOOK WOULD BE FOR A SETBACK TO USG'S OBJECTIVE OF PROMOTING RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. THEREFORE, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT CUTTING MILITARY TRAINING AT THIS TIME WOULD NOT ADVANCE US POLICY BUT COULD RESULT IN A DETERIORATING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION.

4. EMB RECOGNIZES THE DIFFICULTY IN ARGUING FOR CONTINUATION OF MILITARY TRAINING RELATIONSHIP. THE REACTION AMONG ANTI-SOMOZA ACTIVISTS IN THE UNITED STATES AND LOCALLY WOULD LIKELY BE THAT USG CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE SOMOZA REGIME AS IN THE PAST. IT WOULD BE MUCH EASIER TO ADOPT A HANDS OFF POLICY AND LET EVENTS IN THE CONGRES S RUN THEIR COURSE. NEVERTHELESS, THE ADMINISTRATION DECIDED TO REQUEST IMET FUNDS FOR NICARAGUA, A DECISION EMB SUPPORTS, AND EMB WOULD HOPE DEPT WOULD NOT ACQUIESCE IN DELETION OF THOSE FUNDS BUT RATHER GO ON RECORD OPPOSING THAT ACTION.

5. THE ARGUMENT WITH CONGRESS SHOULD BE BASED MOSTLY ON OUR HOPES TO BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE THE GON TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION AND ON PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT HE WILL RELINQUISH
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THE PRESIDENCY AND CONTROL OF THE GN WHEN HIS TERM ENDS. ARGUMENTS EMPHASIZING GROUNDS OF AN IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WILL BE HOTELY DEBATED IN NICARAGUA. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE SCENE OF GN- CIVILIAN CONFRONTATION HAS SHIFTED FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE TO THE CITIES AS A RESULT OF THE CURRENT PROTEST ACTIVITIES. EVEN THOUGH THE GN IS GENERALLY COMPLYING WITH ORDERS TO AVOID SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE, THE LEVEL OF PROTEST AND THE URBAN LOCATION OF THE CONGRON- ATION, HAS HEIGHTENED PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ABUSES WHEN THEY HAVE OCCURRED, AND INCREASED THE FEELING OF PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT. THIS HAS RESULTED IN THE PERCEPTION AMONG MANY OPPOSITIONISTS THAT HUMA RIGHTS ABUSE IS RIFE AND HAS INCREASED. THE PARDOX IS THAT AS THERE IS IN- CREASED MOVEMENT TOWARD A POSSIBLE DEMOCRATICIC OPENING, SIGNS OF DETERIORATION IN PUBLIC ORDER APPEAR. THIS IS A REFLECTION OF THE DIFFICULTY OF INSTITUTIONALIZING A STABLE DEMOCRACY IN A COUNTRY WITHOUT THIS TRADITION.

6. THE OPPOSITION ARGUES THE USG SHOULD BE ISSUING STATEMENTS CONDEM- NING THE GON FOR WHAT IT VIEWS AS THE DETERIORATING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. THE GON ARGUES WE SHOULD BE PUBLICLY CREDITING IT FOR ITS RESTRAINT AND IMPROVEMENTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS ENVIRONMENT. IF WE WERE TO MAKE STATETMENTS WITHOUT CONSIDERABLE PURDENCE WE WOULD INCUR THE WRATH OF AN IMPORTANT SIGMENT OF THE POLICAL SPECTRUM. TO MEET

THE PROBLEMS INDICATED IN PARAGRAPH 5, ANY STATEMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFULLY BALANCED BETWEEN CAUSES AND EFFECTS, I.E. PAST INJUSTICE, PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS OF DEMONSTRATORS AND IDEOLOGICALLY COMMITTED REVOLUTIONARIES, AS WELL AS LACK OF TRAINING OF GN TO HANDLE DEMONSTRATIONS RESULT IN SOME CONTINUED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, ETC. TO BE ABLE TO CONSTRUCTIVELY INFLUENCE BOTH SIDES TOWARD MODERATION, WE MUST BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO WORK PRIVATELY, ACCORDING TO OUR INSTRUCTIONS, TO PROMOTE THE PROCESS OF DIALOG AND NEGOTIATION IN ORDER TO ATTEMPT TO CHECK THE DETERIORATING SITUATION.

7. DURING THE CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION AND APPROPRIATION PROCEDURE, EMB WILL REQUIRE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE ON AN IMMEDIATE BASIS TO SHARE WITH THE GON IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE OUR GOOD FAITH. PLEASE ADVISE WHAT DEPT IS PLANNING VIS-A-VIS CONGRESS AND

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ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

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